PRESIDENT

The Specification Technique of Management

by

ROBERT R. UPDEGRAFF

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Introducing the Specification Technique

THE SPECIFICATION TECHNIQUE presented in this brochure will provide a sharp focus for an organization's abilities, produce action on its plans and projects, and help it maintain its momentum.

Success in using the technique starts, not with methods — important as they are — but with a bold concept. This concept was originally set forth in a fiction story, "Old Specification," written more than thirty years ago for *The Saturday Evening Post* by Robert R. Updegraff. Subsequently published in book form, it has been out of print for many years.

As a story "Old Specification" may seem old-fashioned to today's reader. That is, until he comes to the gloomy Sunday afternoon during the first World War when, in a War Department office in Washington, D. C., the hero of the story discovers an Aladdin's lamp, the magic of which will serve the needs of business in today's highly competitive age as though it had been invented especially to help with tomorrow morning's problems!

Because this story is the basis for effectively employing the specification technique of management, it is retold here by way of introduction. It is followed by the same author's practical application of the story's philosophy to the problems and opportunities of a business, or of any form of organized activity in any field of human endeavor — politics, the sciences, the professions, the arts.

While the use of the specification technique must of course orginate with top management, its execution can and should

be broadly shared by everyone in the organization with creative, administrative, operating or supervisory responsibilities. The specification-writers must depend on the understanding and cooperation of the specification-fillers, and they in turn need the challenge of really tough specifications, broken down into workable assignments.

As a bold and dynamic management concept, the specification technique is calculated to stimulate an organization from top to bottom. Red-blooded men and women respond to the challenge of the difficult, and accomplishing "the impossible" gives meaning and purpose to their jobs.

There is practically no limit to the progress an organization so stimulated can make, or the rate of momentum it can maintain. Nor is there any limit to the progress an individual can make, once he masters the art of managing his work on a specification basis.

— *The Publishers*

OLD SPECIFICATION

The story of a man who discovered a magic lamp.

OLD SPECIFICATION

By ROBERT R. UPDEGRAFF

IF YOU DO NOT BELIEVE in the magic of Mr. Aladdin's umous lamp, the rubbing of which summoned a genie who xecuted its owner's every command, you have never heard ıe story of Parry Brandon. For Parry Brandon found the ımp in a temporary office building in Washington, D. C., on ıe afternoon of December 9, 1917, at 4:25 o'clock.

More surprising yet, he discovered that a certain young lady y the name of Burns—Ethel McNulty Burns—had been carry-ıg the lamp around for a long time and rubbing it to a slangy ıine without getting any good out of it for herself, because ıe lacked the imagination to tell the genie what to do. And ou must admit that without imagination even Mr. Aladdin ould have had little good from his famous lamp.

Naturally Parry Brandon did not realize at the time that he ad found Mr. Aladdin's lamp, for he had not been looking for magic lamp at all. He had been studying with knitted brow sheaf of documents bearing on a certain problem facing the Ordnance Department of the United States Army.

In order, however, to get a proper focus on his discovery, ve must go back to the beginning of the story, which really tarts on Thirty-fourth Street, New York, just west of Sixth Avenue, on a cold January morning in 1913.

Parry Brandon stopped for a moment and peered through he frosty plate-glass window of one of those ever-open and lways-tiled restaurants which attract patrons by means of pan-ake acrobats performing in their front windows. Then, in pite of his strong dislike for open-face restaurants, particularly f they were tiled and had marble-topped tables, he pushed the

door open and entered; entered reluctantly, albeit with a certain dignity of bearing which caused the cashier at her little marble desk at the left of the door to look up involuntarily from the sorting of the morning breakfast checks. It was that same dignity, that striking presence, which had once caused a small newsboy to step up to Parry Brandon as he walked down Broadway and remark, "Say, mister, you must be somebody in particular, ain't you?"

The day was Monday, and it was that hour in the morning when a customer is more or less of an intrusion in a tile-and-nickel restaurant, interfering with the day's scrubbing and polishing and gossiping. The hazy two-hour-old smell of wheat cakes was reminiscent of breakfast, while from over the marble partition at the rear floated a savory meat-and-onion aroma which promised Irish stew for luncheon.

It was indeed that hour when by nice calculation one would figure on combining breakfast and luncheon into a single meal —which was precisely the reason Parry Brandon had selected it.

Not from choice had he planned this combination meal. He liked an eight-forty-five breakfast and a one-thirty luncheon. Nor had he from choice picked this restaurant. He preferred to breakfast and lunch at the Holland House on Fifth Avenue, where he was always to be found, morning and noon, when the gods were good to him.

A white-aproned waitress appeared at his elbow.

"Bring me, please, a baked apple with cream, some bacon and eggs—the bacon nicely crisped—and coffee."

No, the gods had not been good to him of late. His money was practically gone and he had no work on hand and none in definite prospect.

For several minutes he sat gazing unseeingly at the marble-topped table. His forehead was puckered into a deep frown. The hand that rested on the table clenched itself into a tight fist, relaxed, then tightened again.

"I'll tell you what's the matter with you," he addressed

himself suddenly, with brutal candor: "You're nothing but a hack writer. You try to fool yourself with a cutaway coat, a walking stick and a square-crowned derby that you are a commercial publicist. But your services aren't sought after very much nowadays. The advertising agencies which used to get you to write copy for them have their own large staffs of capable writers now, and the trade journals which used to fall over themselves to get you to write business articles for them don't seem to remember your address—unless it's on the upper left-hand corner of a manuscript they want to return to you. You're forty years old this morning, Parry Brandon—forty years old, and—yes, admit it like a man—a rank failure."

There! He had faced the honest truth at last! After fighting for months to keep it back, he had uttered the verdict with his own lips.

The baked apple was placed in front of him. Almost mechanically he picked up a teaspoon.

"Just a hack writer, drifting along from day to day," he continued to tell himself off as he cut into the mushy apple with the brassy spoon. "And where are you drifting to?" he demanded. "You don't belong anywhere; you're not accomplishing anything; you have no purpose. You've been on the staff of every worth-while newspaper in New York in your day, but you've never stuck. They always said you had lots of ideas and imagination, but they never got you anywhere."

His introspection was interrupted. A bustling young fellow in a white linen suit, evidently the manager of the restaurant, was telephoning at the cashier's little marble desk.

"This is Thirty-fourth Street. Ready with the bakery order for tomorrow—thirty-six apples, twenty-four pumpkins, fifteen mochas—"

Parry Brandon wished the fellow wouldn't talk so loud; he didn't want to hear about tons of pies and cakes. A nice V of apple or pumpkin pie with a cube of cheese on the side was delectable; but the contemplation of pies by the dozen, all

piefully alike, was not appetizing. That was the worst of these places anyway. Now, at the Holland House one never saw or heard the kitchen wheels go round.

"Then why don't you go to the Holland House?" he demanded of himself.

The answer was simple. He had just nine dollars and forty-two cents to his name, and not another dollar in prospect. That was why.

He envied the white-suited young man his breezy, business-like manner. He would not be a failure at forty. He had a job; he belonged; his little world would miss him if he failed to show up in the morning.

Twenty minutes later, after leaving ten cents on the marble-topped table and fifty-five cents at the cashier's little marble desk, Parry Brandon left the restaurant and walked over to Fifth Avenue. There he turned south. He might not be able to breakfast at the Holland House, but at least he could go and sit in the lobby for a while. Perhaps his presence would be a work-producing reminder to some of the advertising-agency men who frequented the place at lunch time. It was a plan he had worked before when in need of an assignment.

Certainly he needed work now if ever. He was nearer the edge financially than ever he had been in his life. Not but that he had sometimes had less money in his pocket, but always before there had been money due him. This morning there was none.

He bought a copy of the morning paper at the news stall and sank into a chair in the lobby. For five minutes he sat with his chin resting on his chest, studying the figure of Atlas engraved on the gold charm suspended from his heavy, eighteen-carat, square-linked Dickens watch chain. How tired Atlas must get holding up that big world!

He turned to the paper and tried to get interested in the day's news, but his thoughts kept darting back. Why did he have to be forty on this particular day?

The newspaper slipped to his knees, and he sat gazing abstractedly at the floor, elbow resting on the chair arm, chin resting in the palm of his hand.

"Well, well, Parry! Studying up on tiles?" greeted a cheery voice.

"Why, hello, David Matthews! No, not exactly." Brandon smiled a tragic smile. "I was just thinking."

David Matthews knew Parry Brandon—knew him well, and had often given him special writing to do for his advertising agency. He also knew men, and something in the latter's smile this morning caught him instantly. He dropped into the vacant chair beside his old friend.

"Thinking about what, Parry?" he asked with intentional abruptness.

There was a kindly, uncurious quality in the question that caused Parry Brandon to raise his melancholy brown eyes to his friend's. For three full seconds he looked steadfastly, almost hungrily, into the older man's face. "Thinking about forty—and eight-seventy-four," he replied quite simply.

"The forty?"

"I'm forty years old today."

"The eight-seventy-four?"

"Eight dollars and seventy-four cents—all the money I have in the world."

He said this with the naive directness of a small boy, and vaguely marveled at himself for having made so bald a confession.

"Oh!"—with the gruff gentleness of a father.

"I've been telling myself the truth this morning, David," he blurted. "I'm forty and I'm a rank failure."

"With your personality and your imagination—a failure? No, Parry." And he shook his head emphatically.

"Yes," insisted Parry Brandon, "a failure. My imagination never got me anywhere, and if I have any personality it has stood me in poor stead."

David Matthews was thinking. Brandon needed work, to keep his mind busy and to bring him in some money. As soon as he returned to the office he would look up some special job of writing that he could turn over to him.

"No, David," continued Parry Brandon, "I can't fool myself any longer. I've just lived round the edge of life. I'm not kicking anyone but myself, but at forty it does make a man feel kind of queer to sit in a hotel lobby, that being his only home and hearth, and look at himself and the world and say 'Parry Brandon, you're a failure; you've never fitted in; you don't belong.' "

For as much as two minutes David Matthews sat without speaking. That word "belong" changed everything. It carried him back to the time, twenty-six years before, when he had been floundering round trying to fit himself into a world that for a long time didn't seem to have any niche for him. Evidently Parry Brandon's was a serious case. He had thought the thing through and found himself in a blind alley at forty.

"Let's eat," said David Matthews suddenly, grasping his friend by the arm as he rose.

Brandon started to remonstrate. He had just breakfasted.

"Come on. Eat a piece of pie with me anyway. I want to talk with you. You've given me an idea. In fact I believe you've solved a problem that's been bothering me for two months."

He led Brandon to the dining-room and picked out a table by the window where the sun shone in on the white table linen.

The suggestion of a droop seemed to disappear from Parry Brandon's shoulders as he settled into one of the familiar cherry-wood chairs. He sat up straight and smoothed back the forelock of graying hair that had straggled down over his forehead.

David Matthews knew his man; knew that what he was going to propose would have to be handled very skillfully, for Parry Brandon's pride must not be smudged by a clumsy touch.

Leaning across the table as he spread his napkin, he asked, "You've heard about Briggs?"

"Briggs? You mean R. J.? No; what about him?"

"Left us last week!"

"No!"

"Yes; went down to Florida to run that grapefruit grove he and his brother have been nursing along for five years. As a consequence we are up against it. I've known for three months that he was going, but I couldn't seem to realize it until he actually left, so I wasn't prepared."

Parry Brandon was all concern. He knew Briggs well. He had always thought of him as a fixture with the David Matthews Advertising Agency. He was the account executive who acted as contact man between the agency and three of its oldest clients.

"Why, I supposed Briggs would be with you always! He seemed as permanent as that Persian rug in your front office, David."

"I know it! Part of the furniture. But the furniture has up and left. And now I'm up against it to know what to do for a man to handle Briggs' accounts. You know he has worked on the Weston-Billings Company advertising ever since old Weston gambled on a six-inch ad in *The Saturday Evening Post* back in 1899. This year Weston is spending three-quarters of a million. And as for Farley & Wright, and the C. K. Wingate Company—why, he taught those two firms how to advertise, even if they don't remember it now!

"As I say, I'm at sea. All of our account executives are up to their ears in work. We've taken on five new accounts in the past six months. Anyway, nearly all of the boys are too young to stack up against Briggs' clients. They are older men, and they would resent having a young fellow tell them how they ought to advertise."

Parry Brandon nodded. He could understand that, for he knew old Weston—temperamental old codger—and also Farley, of Farley & Wright, and C. K. Wingate's partner, Nat Besler, who looked after that firm's advertising. In fact he had in years past done special copy work on all of these accounts.

That had been in the days before agency copy and art departments were considered so necessary. Then the David Matthews Agency, like many others, was largely a space brokerage business, and much of the copy and art work was bought on the outside as needed.

"The fact is," Matthews continued, "we haven't a man in the shop to look after these accounts in the way they should be serviced, and I can't devote all my time to them. I can and do keep a close eye on them, of course, but I can't sit in on the everlasting conferences and powwows over copy and plans and art work. Why, it seems as though I haven't had a minute for anything but conferences since Briggs left!"

Parry Brandon could understand that too. "Well, you certainly are up against it, aren't you?" he said, characteristically forgetting his own troubles in his concern over his friend's.

"Now you're coming to it, Parry. I was when I walked into this hotel. But I'm not now." He smiled. "Mr. Briggs' successor is sitting right across the table from me. Why I have wasted three months worrying over the matter is more than I can understand."

Brandon looked puzzled. Then an incredulous half smile lighted his face.

"Who—me?" he exclaimed.

David Matthews nodded.

"You," he said. "You've saved my life, for I know you are going to help me out of this predicament."

There was remonstrance from Parry Brandon. He knew little about agency work. David Matthews contended that he knew the men with whom he would have to deal; he knew the public; and he knew how to talk to the public, which was more necessary than knowing the mere mechanics of an advertising agency.

He was too old to grow time-clock habits. To which Mr. Matthews said, "Never mind the clock; you just look after the clients and keep them happy."

He was forty and a failure. At which David Matthews laughed—merely laughed, but in a way that was more convincing to Parry Brandon than an hour's arguing. And it worked.

Chapter II

If David Matthews expected Parry Brandon to prove the perfect account executive he was doomed to a certain measure of disappointment. He did get along well with the three clients whose interests it was his job to look after; they liked him, and his presence and dignity went far toward filling the gap left by Briggs. Then, too, Brandon had a remarkable imagination. He got such odd, unexpected angles on everything that he was refreshing to his clients.

But somehow he seemed to lack a certain indefinable something. He had ideas, but they did not seem to get across. He would talk in a wonderfully fascinating way about some new plan of campaign, but he could never seem to get it expressed in pictures and type on paper.

As Matthews finally admitted to his wife, "He's an almost wonder, but he can't seem to get himself clear through to the printing press. He peters out some place on the way."

As a result, though the Weston-Billings Company held its own in an advertising way, and neither Farley & Wright nor the C. K. Wingate Company fell back any advertisingly, and though they all seemed fairly well satisfied with the service the agency was giving them, they were not showing that steady advertising expansion that they had each year under the hands of the capable Briggs. And this worried David Matthews, whose hobby was Growth—with a capital G.

Things went along this way for two years. Meanwhile the mutterings of war were floating across from Europe.

Finally the Lusitania, a year of watchful waiting, and we were in the war! Everywhere men and women were talking about doing one's bit.

Parry Brandon's heart was the heart of a staunch patriot. If there was a war he wanted to help fight it. He had no family to support; he was free to offer himself to his country. For weeks he thought the matter over. Why shouldn't he get into the thing? If they wouldn't let him fight, there were many desk jobs where an older man might do his bit and release a younger man for the Front.

In spite of the convincing arguments of David Matthews, the morning of September 21, 1917, found Parry Brandon, wearing the uniform of a first lieutenant, sitting behind a flat-top desk in a noisy, over-desked office in Washington, D.C.

His job was of a more or less routine nature. Certain specifications having to do with small arms and small-arms ammunition passed through his hands before going to the Purchase Section or arsenal for procurement. From them he made numerous records, as well as a tickler file for use in following up the work.

At first these specifications were all Greek to Parry Brandon, but gradually he became familiar with small-arms terminology, and his work grew more interesting. There was plenty of it to do, and having no family, nor anything in the way of outside interests, he worked early and late, and Sundays as well, as did so many other officers in Washington during those feverish days.

It was on a rainy Sunday afternoon in December that Parry Brandon stumbled on Mr. Aladdin's lamp. It was one of those dark, drizzly, heavy-hanging Sundays when the world seems to be absolutely standing still and God seems to be taking a day off.

Gloom hung over the over-desked office—gloom deepened by the strange Sunday quiet. There were only three people in the room: Parry Brandon and a stenographer who had volunteered to come in and work with him, and a second lieutenant over in a far corner who was wading through long sheets of tabulations under a green-shaded droplight.

Parry Brandon was sitting tilted back with his long legs folded grasshopper fashion, so that his feet rested on the base of the swivel chair under him and his knees stuck up in front of him. It was nearly half past four in the afternoon and he had told Miss Burns that she might chase on home. That young lady was adjusting her hat over by the water cooler. Brandon looked up from the sheaf of specification sheets in his hand.

"By the handle of Ursa Major," he exclaimed, addressing the stenographer in that spirit of democratic camaraderie that springs from spending a lonely Sunday together in a lonely office, "they'll never be able to fill this specification. Just listen to this!" And he read a section of a specification calling for a waterproofing for small-arms ammunition to overcome the difficulty they were experiencing in wet trenches.

"They know what they want over there in France all right, but they don't tell us how to make such a waterproofing, and if I know anything about chemistry—which was my best study in college—it just naturally *can't* be done."

"Oh, we should worry about how!" replied Miss Ethel McNulty Burns, giving her hat a little jerk down over her left ear at the same time administering a deft pat to the gob of fiery red hair which hung down over her right ear. "We should worry about how anything is to be done in this department! The colonel says our job is just to see that it is done."

"But how—how, I ask—are they ever going to fill such a specification as *this?*" And Brandon read another paragraph.

"I don't know how," Miss Burns repeated, with the accent on the I, talking with a hatpin gripped transiently between her teeth as she poked an obstinate lock of hair up under her hat. "But I'll say they will! As long as somebody tells 'em what's needed in this man's war, somebody somewhere seems to dope out how to get it." Following which declaration she gathered up her gloves and nearly unpatented patent-leather pocketbook from the nearest desk and breezed out with a cheery "Good night."

Parry Brandon sat thinking. He always had to stop and think it over when a new idea struck him. And this was a novel idea to Parry Brandon: "As long as somebody tells 'em what's needed in this man's war, somebody somewhere seems to dope out how to get it," he repeated slowly to himself, smiling at the language. "We should worry about how! The colonel says our job is just to see that it is done."

"By George, she's right!" he exclaimed aloud, oblivious of the presence of the man in the far corner under the green-shaded droplight. "It never hit me like that before!"

Instinctively he reached for a blue pencil and wrote this new idea on a small sheet of yellow paper. Then with sudden resolve to lay off work for the day he tossed the waterproofing specification sheets into a desk drawer, hastily straightened up the top of his desk, rose and strode over to where his overcoat hung.

"Good night, lieutenant," he called to the man under the green droplight, omitting his name for the excellent reason that he didn't happen to know it.

Half an hour later the second lieutenant snapped off his light and made his way to the door. As he passed Parry Brandon's vacant desk he stooped to pick up a small sheet of yellow paper that had fluttered to the floor. As he laid it on Brandon's desk and put a paper weight on it he unconsciously read the blue-penciled scrawl—"We should worry about how."

In the months that followed Parry Brandon often thought back to that gloomy Sunday afternoon. Specification after specification—sometimes with the "how" incorporated and other times without it—passed over his desk. Some of the specifications were foolish, even ridiculous, for there are engineering dreamers as well as poetic dreamers. But Parry Brandon discovered that practically without exception every specification that was really sensible and necessary seemed somehow to get filled. Including the one for waterproofing small-arms ammunition.

"Yes," he said to himself on frequent occasions, "as long as somebody tells 'em what's needed in this man's war, somebody somewhere seems to dope out how to get it."

Chapter III

WHEN PARRY BRANDON returned to New York three months after the signing of the armistice and stepped out of the elevator into the mahogany-furnished reception room of the David Matthews Advertising Agency he sensed trouble before the elevator door had closed behind him.

"Oh, I'm *so* glad to see you, Mr. Brandon!" greeted Ethel Inchley, the efficient little brunette who for seven hours every day stood between the inside office of conferences, schedules, copy, pictures and proofs, and the outside world of artists, magazine and newspaper representatives, and salesmen for printing, engraving and lithographing houses. "Something's up, I think," she explained in an undertone so those sitting around the big reception room could not hear. "Old Mr. Weston, of the Weston-Billings Company, has just called to see Mr. Matthews, and he looks as cross as an old bear—and you know how affable he usually is."

Ethel Inchley's five years in the reception room had made her a shrewd judge of human nature, and had given her an instinctive sense of men's moods. She knew when to say "Just take a seat, Mr. Blank, and I'll see if Mr. Matthews is in"; and when to greet a caller with "Good morning, Mr. Blank, just walk into Mr. Matthews' office. I know he will want to see you right away."

This morning, with unerring judgment, she had greeted Mr. Weston with the latter formula. And he had stalked down the long hall toward the big front office with merely a gruff grunt at the pretty little brunette.

Parry Brandon straightened up to his full six-feet-one, shifted his square-crowned derby to his left hand, instinctively

adjusted his heavy Dickens watch chain with its charm engraved with the figure of Atlas upholding the world, and involuntarily stroked back the forelock of graying hair.

"Well," he whispered, "as he's one of my clients I think I'll bust right into the battle." And he strode off down the hall, boldly opened the mahogany door at the end labeled "Mr. Matthews—Private," and entered.

Six men sat in a haze of cigar smoke: At the left, David Matthews at his big flat-top mahogany desk; over by the front windows, Joe Dreyer, the production manager, and young McGrath, who had been working on Parry Brandon's accounts under Mr. Matthews' personal direction; at the right, the copy chief and the art editor. In the center of the room, leaning forward aggressively in his chair, sat old man Weston.

"You've had two chances now," the old gentleman was saying, puffing testily on one of his famous long, thin cigars, "and you haven't made good. I have been greatly disappointed —greatly. It seems to me that if after handling my advertising all these years your agency cannot do any better than you have on such a simple problem it is time I found someone else to do my advertising. Why, gentlemen, I am astounded at your incapacity.

"At a conference yesterday afternoon my associates urged that we quit you at once," he continued, "but I argued that you ought to be given a third chance. But I must warn you now that a third failure will prove to me that your organization isn't up to its old standard and can no longer serve me."

So tense had been the situation that Parry Brandon had entered and stood unnoticed during this vitriolic speech. Now all six men turned to him. He stood calm and smiling.

"So," he said, with just the slightest trace of embarrassment but with all his old graciousness and dignity, "all the country's troubles haven't been centered in Washington, as I thought! It's a great relief to find that business still has its battles. I was afraid I was going to find advertising an unexciting business

after my many months in small-arms and ammunition! Tell me about it."

It took half an hour to get the story straightened out, and then it was very simple: Old man Weston, in addition to being the multi-millionaire president of the Weston-Billings Company, manufacturers of sporting goods, had for years been a director in the Barthberry Tool Company. For three generations Barthberry tools had enjoyed a wonderful reputation among carpenters and mechanics. The company had of course sold tools to all comers, householders as well as housebuilders, but they had never definitely cultivated the householder as a market.

As a director, Mr. Weston had long advocated that they go after the popular market in an aggressive way, with a big advertising campaign. His fellow directors were always considering the matter, but their considerations never culminated in action, and action was old Weston's one and only gospel. Finally, with the ending of the war, he had become impatient, and in a fit of temperament had pulled out his check book at a directors' meeting and written out a check for a staggering sum and tossed it to the president with the challenge: "Sell me the business for that figure and I'll show you how to put it on the map!"

The directors had gasped. When the president read off the amount of the check they had gasped again.

"Oh, I know it isn't worth that much now!" old Weston had declared. "But I'll make it worth that much, and a lot more, in less than two years. As for the check—no, I haven't that much money in the bank, but just say the word and I'll have it there inside of thirty-six hours—and send you the check duly certified." Then he had risen. "Gentlemen," he had said, "I shall leave you now to discuss this matter. Give me your answer by three o'clock."

On the morning of the eighth day following he had become owner of the Barthberry Tool Company. His first act had been to call up David Matthews.

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"I have a new business for you to make famous. I wish you'd bring some of your folks down here this afternoon to discuss plans, and then tomorrow we'll go up to Connecticut to the plant, if that's agreeable to you."

And so it had transpired that the David Matthews Agency had worked up an advertising campaign for the Barthberry Tool Company—a remarkable institutional campaign, with wonderful copy that told of the reputation of Barthberry tools, and impressive art work that fairly dripped prestige.

In Mr. Matthews' absence McGrath had taken the portfolio of advertising proofs down to Mr. Weston's office for his approval, and beautiful ads they were indeed. The old gentleman had greeted McGrath cordially, watched him interestedly as he untied the brown tape with which Matthews Agency packages were always tied. Eagerly he had opened the big leather-bound portfolio which McGrath handed him. He liked advertising—was in fact a natural-born advertiser.

As he had glanced at the first advertisement the eager smile on his face had faded a bit. As he had turned to the second page it had disappeared entirely. At the third page he had begun to scowl. Then quickly he had thumbed through the rest of the pages on which the beautiful ad proofs were pasted, and abruptly handed the portfolio back to McGrath.

"That campaign won't begin to sell tools for a year," he had announced. "I want to sell tools right away— r-i-g-h-t a-w-a-y. Give me something specific—specific, you understand, young man." And he had turned to his desk with an irritated little cough that McGrath instinctively understood as a danger signal.

The next day David Matthews had taken lunch with Mr. Weston, but with no better results. The old man knew what he didn't want, even though he could not tell exactly what he did want, except that it must be something specific that would sell tools right away.

"Eighteen hundred items in their catalogue, and he asks us to be specific in the advertising!" groaned the agency's produc-

tion manager when he and McGrath had listened to their chief's report of the luncheon conversation.

Three days later McGrath had arrived at the office with an idea—a specific idea. Why not build a whole campaign round a certain sure-to-sell combination tool on page forty-eight of the catalogue—give it a good name—feature it big—get across the rest of the Barthberry line with the slogan "One of the eighteen hundred honest Barthberry tools used by three generations of skilled workmen." To be followed, of course, by the usual "Catalogue on request; or better still, ask to see Barthberry tools at your local hardware store."

And so another campaign had been built—another wonderful campaign featuring "Old Trusty—the Tool of a Thousand Uses."

Mr. Matthews had intended to take the portfolio of this campaign down himself to submit to Mr. Weston, but on the appointed day he had been called unexpectedly for jury duty, and once more McGrath had had to do the honors.

Also, once again old Weston had greeted him cordially, watched him hopefully as he undid the brown tape round the package, and reached out eagerly for the portfolio. And again the hopeful smile on his face had faded a bit as he looked at the first ad, had disappeared entirely at the second page, and had turned into a scowl as he thumbed quickly through to the last page.

"You can't keep a big factory working eight hours a day on one measly tool, young man," he had remarked sharply. "And besides," he had added, "didn't it occur to you that when you sell this combination tool it takes the place of half a dozen other tools in a home? That's why the company has never pushed it. It was put in the line three years ago merely to meet competition."

The old gentleman had been terribly irritated. Three months, and he was no nearer putting Barthberry tools on the map than on the day he had bought the business.

The next morning he had gone direct from home to deliver an ultimatum to David Matthews. He could have until the first of the month—just three weeks and three days—to prepare a third and last advertising campaign.

That was the story Parry Brandon pieced together following his timely entrance.

It must be admitted right here that at the time Parry Brandon had left to go to Washington, David Matthews had really felt relieved to have the war take him away from the agency; and indeed, much as he liked him, had secretly hoped that he might turn to some other work when the war was over. He had been disappointed in him. But months before he had changed his mind. For even though Brandon wasn't so successful as Briggs had been, he had done better than anyone else had been able to do with those three accounts. Mr. Matthews had in fact written to Parry Brandon urging him to come back as soon as peace should be declared and he could honorably shed his war job.

At first when Parry Brandon started to speak, as the six men in the smoky office turned to greet him, David Matthews felt some misgiving. This tall, gray-haired man, with a square-crowned derby in his left hand and wearing a cutaway coat and a heavy square-linked Dickens watch chain, seemed to have stepped from some old portrait of the past. Personality—yes; imagination—yes; enthusiasm—yes, unquenchable enthusiasm for anything that appealed to his fancy. But was he a business man, or was he merely a dreamer of dreams—a builder of commercial air castles, which he could sketch but not construct?

All the time Parry Brandon was asking questions to get the snarled strands of the story unraveled, David Matthews had closely watched his face. Yes, the old fire and imagination were there. Washington had not smothered him. But——

"Now I get the story," Brandon was saying, "and I see what you're after, Mr. Weston. You want to sell tools—lots of tools—right away. And you want to go further—you want to sell positive affection for Barthberry tools; you want to make

the men of America feel the personality of tools just as carpenters do, almost as the sportsman feels about his rifle or his fishing rod. You want a man's kit of Barthberry tools to become part of his life—mechanical friends to reach for automatically when an odd job needs doing round the house; and for the office man, Barthberry tools as agencies of relaxation after a hard day of mental activity.

"You want to make men almost *love* Barthberry saws and hammers and block planes and chisels because they are so helpful and honest and dependable. But you realize that they have to *buy* them first before ever they can begin to *love* them."

He talked on, speaking easily but with the deadly enthusiasm of a quiet man full of vision and inspiration. Presently he stopped and looked at the group before him almost apologetically.

"Am I rambling hopelessly?" he asked.

"Brandon," said old Mr. Weston, "I've always felt that way about tools—that's why I bought stock in the Barthberry Tool Company eleven years ago. But nobody ever put it into words for me before. I am astonished at your grasp of the idea. That, gentlemen," turning to the group, "is the kind of advertising I want for Barthberry tools. But remember, Brandon, as you say yourself, they have to *buy* them first. We must sell a lot of tools in a very short time. If you can do it," he added a minute later, standing with his hand on the door knob, "I'll treat you all to the finest little dinner my club can set up."

Chapter IV

BY ELEVEN O'CLOCK the next morning Parry Brandon had heard all sides of the story, had been through the portfolios of both of the unsuccessful Barthberry campaigns, and was ready to get down to business. Young McGrath was assigned to him as an assistant to take all the detail off his shoulders,

and his desk had already been moved into Brandon's office.

From eleven o'clock until twelve-thirty Brandon sat looking out the window. At twelve-thirty he reached for a tablet of interoffice memo blanks, inserted a sheet of carbon paper, scribbled the production manager's name after the word "To," and then almost automatically wrote at the top of the sheet the word "Specification." He paused a second, then wrote:

Please furnish the following information:

1. What tools men need for household use in the following places: Poughkeepsie, New York; Hartford, Connecticut; and New Bedford, Massachusetts.

2. Where and how these men keep their collection of tools—in the cellar or garret, in tool chests, on benches, hanging up, scattered or dumped any old place.

3. What range of jobs men do round the house with tools.

4. The psychological price at which a household set of tools should sell.

Brandon tore this sheet from the tablet, tossed it into his "out" basket, handed the carbon copy to McGrath, took his square-crowned derby and walking stick from the closet in the corner, and went out to the Holland House for lunch.

Returning from lunch at two-thirty, he sat down in his desk chair, lighted a cigar and spent nearly an hour chatting with McGrath.

Presently the door opened and Dreyer, the production manager, an old war horse in the advertising business, came in, his shoulders hunched belligerently.

"Look here, Mr. Brandon," he remonstrated, holding up the memo sheet, "this specification of yours is outside of my province."

"I rather wondered if it wasn't," replied Brandon good-naturedly. "But we haven't a regular market research department to handle such things, and you're such a good production manager I thought perhaps you could produce the required information."

Somewhat salved by the compliment, Dreyer's shoulders relaxed a little.

"That's all very well, but I can't see how I can fill your specification. We aren't geared up for such work. It means traveling round and doing a lot of special investigating, and who can I send?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Parry Brandon frankly. "All I know is that I *must* have that information."

"Oh, let me dig it out," interjected young McGrath. "I'd like nothing better than to get out and quiz people on a job like this, and I believe I know just how to go about getting what you want."

"Well, now what do you think of *that?*" demanded Brandon. "It works here in New York just as it did in Washington!"

"What works?" asked Dreyer.

"Why, there seems always to be someone who knows just how to go ahead to do the sort of things I never could imagine myself doing—and who actually *likes* to do it!"

Ten days later McGrath arrived back at the office with a mass of information and a charge of enthusiasm that made Parry Brandon chuckle with delight. For two days they studied these facts and figures.

"Just to think," Parry Brandon exclaimed half a dozen times, "that a man can get such a mine of information just by *asking* for it!"

On the following Tuesday morning old man Weston found in his pile of morning letters the following from his advertising agency:

Dear Mr. Weston:—In order to make the advertising of Barthberry tools effective it must conform to the following specifications:

1. It must offer specific tools needed constantly for odd jobs round the house.
2. These tools must be sold in a chest at a combination price, but must also be offered for sale separately.
3. The chest must be of the type used by carpenters, which closes

and latches and has a handle, so that it can be carried round the house conveniently.

4. The chest must contain:

1 hammer
1 gimlet
1 screw driver (6 inch)
1 pair pliers (6-inch universal)
1 6-foot zig-zag rule
1 22-inch panel saw
3 chisels—$\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{5}{8}$ and $\frac{7}{8}$ inches
1 monkey wrench (8 inch)
1 block plane
1 oil can
4 files (flat, round, half round and slim taper)
1 brace with $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch bits, screw driver and counter sink
1 nail set
1 cold chisel ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch)
1 carpenter's flat pencil
1 try-square (8 inch)

5. There must be a little section of four compartments, with a hinged cover, for nails.

6. The retail price of the chest must be not more than $18.75.

Please have the factory furnish us with a chest made up to these specifications at the earliest possible moment so that we can have photographs made and descriptions written for the new Barthberry advertising campaign.

Yours very truly,

DAVID MATTHEWS ADVERTISING AGENCY,
By Parry Brandon.

"Well," snorted old Weston as he laid the letter down, "since when has our advertising agency had the right to boss us round with a set of specifications?" Turning he called, "Holden, ask Mr. Grant to come here."

Ed Grant, long-time general manager of the Barthberry Tool Company, who had come down from the factory for a week at his new chief's office, stepped in at once.

"Grant, what do you think of that?"

Grant read the letter through carefully. "Why," he said

finally, "I think this man Brandon knows just what he's doing."

"Well—well"—taken rather aback—"well, perhaps he does. Yes, I believe he does. Take care of it, please—and very promptly, Mr. Grant."

Three days later a special messenger from the Barthberry factory entered Parry Brandon's office with a carpenter-type tool chest with a handle for carrying. Brandon and McGrath opened the chest.

"Now isn't that wonderful!" exclaimed Brandon, examining the layout with genuine admiration. "And to think that all we had to do was to *ask* for it!"

Suddenly he rang for a stenographer.

"Memorandum to Mr. Dreyer," he dictated.

"I am turning over to you a chest of tools which we are to feature in the Barthberry advertisements. Please provide:

"1. A suitable name conforming to the following specifications: It shall be simple, easy to pronounce and easy to remember. It shall be such a name as can be referred to with something akin to affection, rather than a mechanical name.

"2. A suitable copy description (*a*) of the chest itself; (*b*) of each individual tool in the chest. These descriptions shall be more than ordinary mechanical descriptions of size, price, and so on; they shall describe each tool from the angle of what it will do for its owner.

"3. A photograph of the chest closed.

"4. A photograph of the chest open with the tools all so arranged that each of them can easily be seen, with each tool plainly numbered.

"Also, please provide twelve pieces of copy conforming to the specification outlined in our conference with Mr. Weston on the day of my return. Make men see these tools as friends."

"Underscore that word 'friends,' Miss Bradley. And that will be all for now, thank you."

"Well," exclaimed Parry Brandon as the stenographer disappeared into the hall, "I never knew business could be such fun! Just sit and tell folks what you want and never worry about how!"

But two days later Parry Brandon began to see the other

side of it. The twelve pieces of "rush" copy which came through from the copy department were flat, mechanical and far from having the spirit called for in the specification.

"What shall we do about it?" asked McGrath as Brandon gave free expression to his opinion of the copy.

"Just what we did down at Washington—send it back." And he scribbled a memo, attached it to the copy and rang for a boy.

Half an hour later the copy chief entered. "I'm afraid if you want copy to fill your specification you'll have to write it yourself, Mr. Brandon. None of our men seems to be able to get the hang of it, and I must admit that *I* couldn't write it."

"Neither could I, not to save my life," laughed Parry Brandon. "I only know the kind of copy I want, and that such copy can be written. I leave the rest to you. Here, just a minute——"

He searched in his inside coat pocket, produced half a dozen dog-eared envelopes and a worn wallet in which he fumbled until he found a yellowed page from an old magazine. "Listen to this for copy:

Are you Bill Smith? Get your hat on then and come along with me! I want to talk to you outdoors. Yes; light your pipe and sit down here on this log. Seems like I can't breathe indoors. Can you? Say, Bill, do you ever read yourself into a state of intoxication about outdoor life —real life? Great, isn't it? Well, how'd you like to have a magazine come to you every month to tease your appetite for hunting, fishing, camping, canoeing—living? You know—bring you the air of the mountains when you can't be out in them—the glow of a camp fire at night—a touch of the streams and marshes—the smell of fresh varnish on the little power boat at paint-up time! Say!

"Now, that's what I call copy," exclaimed Parry Brandon. "We want somebody who loves tools like that man loves the outdoors to write our Barthberry copy."

"But there isn't a man in our shop who can write that kind of tool copy," protested the copy chief.

"Well, then I'll have to depend on you to go out into the highways and byways and find someone who can. Nothing short of that spirit in copy will do."

It was said with Parry Brandon's usual graciousness; it carried no barb; but there remained no doubt of the fact that such copy must be provided somehow.

Later in the day the copy chief returned.

"We're stuck on a name to fit your specification, Mr. Brandon," he reported. "I have this list of twenty-six names, but none of them seems to fit."

Parry Brandon smiled and handed back the list without even glancing at it. "I'm sure I shall not be satisfied unless you are," he said. "Won't you give the matter just a little further thought?"

"I don't know what's got into Mr. Brandon since he's come back," the copy chief confided to Joe Dreyer, whom he met in the hall. "He's an awful stickler for having exactly what he gets his mind set on. He never used to be so hard to work with."

"What now?" inquired the production manager sympathetically.

"Oh, that specification of his for a name for the Barthberry tool chest!"

"Say," exclaimed Dreyer, "I've been thinking of that myself since I passed that production order through to you. What's the matter with using the name we gave that combination tool?"

"You mean Old Trusty?"

"Yes. Doesn't that just about fit the specification?"

"By George, it does!" exclaimed the copy chief, and he turned and retraced his steps to Brandon's office.

"The Barthberry Old Trusty Tool Chest," repeated Brandon several times. *"Fine!"* he exclaimed. "And I believe Old Trusty can be protected too. It isn't descriptive."

When the copy chief had gone Brandon turned to his assistant:

"McGrath, my boy, you see it pays to fight for our specifications. I propose a new office motto: 'Smile—But Insist.'"

Impulsively he wrote it on a blank index card, which he propped up against his ink well.

There followed hectic days of struggling with copy and pictures and schedules. More than once, as Parry Brandon looked at his calendar with the fatal first of the month approaching, he almost weakened on something that didn't conform to his specification. Then he would look at the little motto card on his desk and insist—with a smile.

As the last week started to slip away swiftly, everything began to come to a head. Copy was rushed to the printer to be set up, revised, rushed back for correction. Pictures of Old Trusty open and closed were retouched, O. K.'d and hustled off to the plate maker. Then proofs—proofs—proofs!

"What I'd call orderly confusion," laughed David Matthews as he stood in Parry Brandon's office looking down on his cluttered desk the afternoon of the last day of the month.

That night a light shone from a sixteenth-floor window until nearly midnight. Young McGrath and Parry Brandon were racing with the clock to get all the ads made up into a big portfolio ready for the morrow.

Chapter V

Old Weston rocked back and forth in his swivel chair and watched Parry Brandon interestedly as he untied the brown tape round the package and drew out the leather portfolio. Eagerly, hopefully the old man took it into his hands and opened to the first page. There he saw a big friendly tool chest that looked ready for any emergency.

He saw a little sketch of a man carrying the chest upstairs, and under the sketch a caption reading, "Haven't you often noticed when you get started on an odd job of carpentering round the house that the one tool you most need is always downstairs or up in the attic? Not so with Old Trusty. Take him by the handle and your tools are all right there. That's Old Trusty anyway—right there always!"

He saw a narrow panel down one side with a display head-

ing, "Old Trusty Complete, $18.75," and under it, "Or buy any of these good honest Barthberry tools separately at the prices listed below."

He read copy that made hammers and block planes and zigzag rules seem positively human.

Not until he had read that ad—and the next and the next and the next, clear on through to the last one—did old Weston speak or even look up. Then he summed it all up in one explosive sentence:

"That'll sell tools!"

Chapter VI

ON A SUMMERISH NIGHT three months later a long table was set in one of the private dining rooms of an exclusive uptown club.

"Mr. Weston's party is on the third floor, sir," answered the dignitary at the door to Parry Brandon's inquiry.

Two minutes later he was the center of a merry group, the merriest member being old Weston himself, who was mixing round introducing his associates of the Barthberry Tool Company to the group of Matthews Agency men who had sat in at the funereal conference in Mr. Matthews' office on that eventful morning when Parry Brandon had returned from the war just in time to bring peace.

Finally they all sat down, David Matthews at old Weston's right and Parry Brandon at his left, with Barthberry and Matthews men alternated round the rest of the table.

Such a dinner! Oysters, soup, fish, mushrooms under glass – it was during this course that David Matthews, big, human man that he was, turned to Mr. Weston and remarked with a quizzical grin and in a tone low enough that Parry Brandon might not overhear: "I don't mind telling you now that when Mr. Brandon left to go to Washington I was rather hopeful that he wouldn't come back. He had good ideas — in fact he has a

remarkable imagination—but like so many other men of imagination, he didn't seem to be able to bring his ideas *through*. They got lost on the way. If he couldn't see just how to do a thing he didn't attempt it. But now——"

Old Weston leaned over and filled out David Matthews' sentence in a whisper behind his hand:

"But now—he's found a secret that is going to make him a very big man. Ideas move the world, and he's learned that there is someone somewhere who can work out the details of *any* idea for the man who will furnish the specification. I tell you, Parry Brandon has found a magic lamp."

Roast guinea fowl, sorbet, alligator-pear salad—it was during the salad course that Mr. Weston confided to David Matthews that he had a nephew who had been in Washington during the war. He had worked in the small-arms ammunition section of the Ordnance Department. On a certain rainy Sunday afternoon he and a man named Brandon and a stenographer, a Miss Burns, had been the only ones working in the big office. He had been the last to leave. And on the way out he had picked up a small sheet of yellow paper from the floor beside Brandon's vacant desk, and smiled as he involuntarily read a sentence scrawled on it in blue pencil. Old Weston leaned close and whispered something in Mr. Matthews' ear.

Ice cream, crackers and cheese, demitasse, cigars—the latter Mr. Weston's own private stock.

Parry Brandon never did fully recall what happened next. Mr. Weston had launched into a speech congratulating the Matthews Agency on the Old Trusty campaign and telling what a wonderful success it was already proving. Then suddenly he had found himself in the limelight. For the first time in his whole life he—Parry Brandon, who had been a failure at forty—was being publicly lauded for having succeeded where others had failed! A kindly old gentleman was talking to a long tableful of men about Mr. Aladdin and his magic lamp.

Then suddenly he had found himself standing on his feet—

or was it his head?—accepting from this old gentleman a little jeweler's box.

Half an hour later there walked down Fifth Avenue, as far as the Holland House, where he turned in, a tall man of dignified bearing who, judging by outward appearances, would be in his early forties, but who actually was merely a boy with a new toy, which was concealed in a little box which he clutched in his left hand.

Unlocking the door of the room on the fourth floor which had come to be his home since his return from Washington, Parry Brandon switched on the light and dropped into an easy-chair.

"Now how did he ever know about *that?*" he demanded of himself as he examined a solid-gold watch charm in the form of a miniature replica of Aladdin's famous lamp. For there round the edge, engraved in the tiniest letters, he read the words, "We should worry about how."

"Well," he said to himself half aloud as he took the worn old charm off his square-linked Dickens watch chain, "old Atlas, you've been hanging round me long enough trying to teach me to hold the world up by sheer force of muscle. You haven't made good. I hereby announce that from now on I pin my faith on Mr. Aladdin's magic lamp. We'll just see if it won't make the world carry a bit easier."

Almost affectionately he polished the new charm with his silk handkerchief, and held it off at arm's length under the light, his eyes shining. As he snapped it on the ring of his watch chain he noticed more engraving on the bottom of the lamp. Holding it up under the light he read:

To Old Specification
from
Old Weston

"I'm not so old at that," he chuckled to himself, glancing into the mirror. And the face that smiled back at him certainly was not!

The
Specification Technique
of Management

The practical application of the specification technique to the problems and potentials of a business, or any organized activity.

By the author of

OLD SPECIFICATION

Applying the Specification Technique

THE EFFECTIVE APPLICATION of the specification technique, as introduced by the story of "Old Specification," begins with this startling but scarcely controvertible fact:

> *The world has arrived at a state of scientific knowledge, accumulated experience, and inventiveness where almost any specification we have the imagination and faith to write can be fulfilled by somebody, somewhere, if given a reasonable amount of time and persistent follow-through.*

We see evidences of this almost every day in articles published in the daily newspapers and the monthly magazines, in trade, business and professional periodicals, and in the publications of scientific societies.

Practically speaking, today our accomplishments and our progress are limited by only four factors: our *imagination,* our *faith,* our *perseverance* and our *patience.*

* * *

In the early days of the automobile a boldly imaginative business journalist wrote a challenging specification for a type of transmission which would eliminate the need for shifting gears. Some years later this journalist received a letter in his morning mail telling him that his specification had been fulfilled; that the new model Oldsmobile had such a transmission. Today automatic transmission is commonplace.

Twenty years ago the present writer wrote a specification

calling for a method of lighting rooms without concentration of light at any particular point or over a limited area . . . "a pervasive glow of light," he specified. Westinghouse recently announced such a development — "No light bulbs, tubes, or fixtures . . . The very walls and ceiling glow . . . In the research stage today but someday it will light homes and offices."

Undoubtedly it will, for the basic specification has been fulfilled.

These are two dramatic instances of specification writing. But the same bold and imaginative approach can be used in solving the problems we all meet in our everyday work, and also in taking advantage of the opportunities that present themselves.

Whatever our job or responsibility, it must be focused on an *end-result* if we are to be really successful. That end-result may be to *manage* or *operate* something, to *do* something, to *make* something, to *create* something, to *sell* something — to *accomplish* something.

It is easier, and usually much faster, to achieve the end-result of a job, whether at the top executive level or down in the ranks, if we develop the habit of working to simple, clear-cut, understandable specifications. If we can sharply visualize the desired end-result of everything we have to do, we will more clearly see the path to be taken, or the most effective means or methods to be used.

To start using the specification technique in our work, we have only to begin today to decide *exactly* what we want to do, to make, to produce, to accomplish in connection with whatever we are working at, and then formulate a clear-cut specification for this end-result. This is the simple first requirement. The second is equally important: to *insist* on its being fulfilled,

whether we do the fulfilling ourselves or with the help of others.

We need not hold back on writing really tough specifications either:

— Because we cannot personally see just how the specification can be fulfilled; or
— Because it seems "impossible" of fulfillment; or
— Because it has been attempted before without success.

As Parry Brandon discovered, it is not at all necessary to worry about *how* a specification is to be fulfilled. The world is full of people and services and organizations which know how to do almost anything we can ask to have done. What is more, there always seems to be someone who really enjoys undertaking assignments that to us would be difficult, disagreeable, or utterly impossible.

Often it is a mistake even to suggest how a specification might be fulfilled, for we thereby impose the limitations of our own restricted experience, knowledge or imagination. Many otherwise capable executives mistakenly take pride in dictating exactly how everything shall be done. In doing this they inadvertently rob others of the experience and satisfaction of working out ideas and plans in the areas of their special skill, ability or interest. What is more, they slow down their own progress.

Of course, where great expense is involved or considerable risk is entailed, or when time is an extremely important factor, it may be wise to suggest a method, or at least an approach. In many instances, also, it is a good idea to ask the person or persons who are to undertake a particular specification to outline their proposed approach, in order to make sure they are not starting off on the wrong track.

But, unless we are expert in the particular area involved, the less we dictate methods, the less likely we will be to hamper others in fulfilling our specifications. This leaves the specification-fillers scope for the exercise of their imagination,

creativeness, inventiveness, resourcefulness. When they do this they grow and develop as helpers.

Today the fact that a specification may be "impossible" is only a challenging hurdle to be cleared.

Accomplishing "the impossible" may take a bit of time, but this means only that time is part of the specification.

We should never forget that what is impossible to one man or group or organization, may be quite possible to another. Finding the right man or group or organization is often part of the specification.

Faith — deep-down faith — is another important ingredient of every specification. Not the faith of the old woman who prayed that the mountain behind her house might be moved in the night, and exclaimed when she looked out the window the next morning, "There — I *knew* it wouldn't move!" Rather, the faith of the contractor who equips himself with dynamite and steam shovels and a crew of workmen and causes the mountain to be moved!

The fact that someone has tried before without success to fulfill a particular specification does not mean that it cannot be fulfilled today. In the intervening period some new discovery, some recent invention or development, or some fresh experience may make possible what was literally "impossible" yesterday.

* * *

This, then, is the bold approach to take toward every problem and opportunity facing us: To start with the assumption that it *can* be done, that it is our responsibility to formulate clear-cut specifications, not as to method but as to the end-result, and either fulfill them ourselves or find someone who can.

We no longer have to be satisfied with what we know to be "possible."

There are available to us today all sorts of wonderful ser-

vices which can do or produce just about anything we want done or produced, from gathering information or testing products, to building machines which all but think. They are part of our equipment-for-accomplishment, if we have the imagination and the faith to utilize them to supplement our own experience and abilities. But it is essential that we write clear-cut and concrete specifications.

Six Basic Types of Specifications

SPECIFICATIONS FALL into six basic types, some of which apply primarily in business, some in broader areas of human affairs. They are:

Project Specifications
Problem Specifications
Potentials Specifications
People Specifications
Plan or Program Specifications
Meeting or Conference Specifications

Some of these types of specifications overlap. Often they turn from one type into another as work on them progresses. A brief explanation of each of the six, with typical applications, may be helpful.

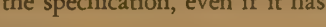
* * *

Project Specifications As the name implies, this type includes such projects as the development of a new product or service, the building of a new plant, the setting up of a new department or function, the cutting down of the time factor in some operation, the reduction of a cost, the sale of a piece of property or equipment, the crystallization of an industrial relations policy.

The specifications should start with the end-result desired. For example, the production requirements of the new plant and the limit of its cost; the specific purpose of the new department or function, with a definite statement of the contribution to profits or operating efficiency expected; reduction of a cost by a definite amount or percentage; the price and terms to be

sought in connection with the property or equipment to be sold; the use to be made of the industrial relations policy and the form in which it is to be issued.

A time factor, and where possible even a timetable, should be incorporated in the specification, even if it has to be revised as the project progresses.



Problem Specifications The solution to specific problems can be expedited by turning them into specifications. The problem may be a mechanical one, such as eliminating the gearshift on an automobile, as already mentioned. Or it may be a way to get around some obstacle; the countering of some competitive threat; the reorganization of a department to cure an organizational weakness; the complete overhauling of the budget to insure a profit.

The specification should start with a brief and factual statement of the problem, so that everyone concerned will know exactly what it is, followed by a clear statement of the desired end-result. It may include the method for overcoming the problem, but, as already suggested, in most cases it is desirable to leave the method open, for there may be a simpler, better, quicker, cheaper or more effective method than the specification-writer can offer. Letting the members of an organization struggle with a clearly stated problem-specification is the finest kind of executive training.

Again, the time-factor should be part of the specification.

Potentials Specifications The undeveloped — or underdeveloped — potentials of a business make the finest kind of specification-projects. Typical potentials might be the enlargement of the market for a particular product or service through the reduction of production or marketing costs; the development of a new process, machine or tool that will save on pay

roll; the creation of a new product. Here the specification should start with a brief statement of the potentials visualized by the specification-writer. It should, however, allow others as much latitude as possible to contribute their ideas.

While some sort of timetable should be included, usually it will have to be more flexible than with other types of specifications. However, potentials specifications should not be permitted to drift aimlessly. A date should be set for an initial progress report and, when made, a new date set for the next report, or for the consummation of the project.

* * *

People Specifications This represents one of the greatest — and least used — areas for specification-writing. We are too prone to accept what the market offers when looking for people, whether for top executives, department or section heads, superintendents, managers, secretaries, foremen or clerical workers. It is surprising how often exactly the right combination of experience and abilities can be found if a definite specification is provided — *and stubbornly adhered to.*

We may not find the ideal man for any job, but certainly we are not likely to unless we specify exactly the man we want. So why not list all the desired qualifications, and come as close as possible to filling them?

Not infrequently a clearly written specification will uncover a qualified candidate within the organization.

While it is often hard to set a definite time for fulfilling a people-specification, at least a target date should be set, to give the project urgency.

* * *

Plan or Program Specifications This is a broad category which includes advertising or sales programs; economy programs; plans or programs in the realm of production, dis-

tribution, cost control, public relations, purchasing, personnel administration, engineering, etc.

As with the other five categories, a plan or program specification should start with a brief but sufficiently comprehensive outline so that all who are to work on it will have a clear idea of the desired end-result. The *why* as well as the *what* should be part of this outline, for when people understand *why* they work ever so much more effectively.*

* * *

Meeting or Conference Specifications This category includes every kind of meeting or gathering, from a routine committee meeting to a sales conference, an important management conclave, a convention, or a meeting of the board of directors.

The plans for a meeting or conference should be made *backward.* The specification should deal with the reactions we want those in attendance to take away with them when the meeting is over. For example, a sales convention is to be called to introduce a new line, inaugurate a new price-and-terms structure, review the competitive situation, and send the salesmen out in a conquering mood. The specification might read:

CONVENTION SPECIFICATION

To insure that every man on the sales force goes back to the field:

(1) With a clear understanding of the new line, and its most effective sales points.

(2) With a thorough knowledge of the new prices and terms, and an understanding of how they were arrived at.

(3) With a clear and convincing picture of the advantages of every item in the new line, as to quality, design, special features, price, etc., in relation to competition.

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* This aspect of management is dealt with in detail in *FOUR KEYS TO ABLE MANAGEMENT*, by Robert Rawls. 32 pages. Executive Development Press, Inc.

(4) With a feeling that they are squared away for a very successful selling season.

(5) With the conviction that they are working for a mighty fine company which is interested in their success.

It is surprising how a carefully thought out specification will simplify the building of a convention program, and carry through to the desired end-result. The same holds for any type of meeting or conference.

A large volume could easily be filled with other examples of the application of the specification technique. Suffice it to say that *any* problem facing a business — or an individual — can be turned into a specification. Usually the problem will shrink in size and difficulty when so treated.

Opportunities can likewise be turned into specifications. In fact, until they *are* crystallized into specifications they can hardly be rated as opportunities.

* * *

It will not have escaped the reader's notice that a considerable part of the magic of the specification technique is:

That it involves thinking into and through the problem, project or opportunity. Otherwise it cannot be expressed in a clear-cut specification;

That it sets a time or schedule to give focus to the activities of all who are to participate;

That it keeps the project or plan moving, so that it does not lose its momentum.

Maintaining momentum, through advance time-scheduling and meticulous follow-through, is about half the secret of successful management with the specification technique.

Specifications Must Be Simple, Clear and Comprehensive

THE NO. 1 SPECIFICATION for the successful use of the specification technique is: *to make every specification simple, clear and comprehensive.*

More than thirty years of watching organizations struggle to get results has convinced me that the greatest weakness in business organizations is that the directions given for projects to be undertaken or results to be achieved are vague and incomplete. This fault starts at the very top and extends down through department heads and supervisors.

A project to be undertaken is outlined — all too often verbally — in general terms, only partially digested as to facts and requirements, with no specific end-result spelled out. It is left on someone's shoulders in the pious hope that through some miracle it will be ably and promptly handled.

No wonder it often takes a second or third try before the desired result is attained. No wonder so much time and energy are consumed in carrying out the simplest plans. No wonder executives are so often disappointed in the way their people take hold of a job or project. They are expected to be mind readers!

Vague instructions and half-baked concepts of the job to be done or the end-result to be achieved are not fair, either to the project or those who are to carry it out.

The trouble stems from the fact that, instead of being carefully thought through and expressed in simple, clear and comprehensive fashion before the project is undertaken, too often the planning is done along the way, with much backing and filling as unforeseen (but not unforeseeable) obstacles are

encountered. This is wasteful of time and energy. It reflects not on the specification-filler but on the one who should have but did not, think clear through and provide the needed facts and factors.

A specification should be sharply specific. Turn back to pages 26, 27 and 29 and reread the specifications written by Parry Brandon. They clearly *pictured* what he wanted.

The responsibility of the specification-writer is to make sure the picture he has in his mind is transferred to the mind of whoever is to fulfill the specification. Partly this will be a matter of semantics; but more importantly it must reflect clear thinking, careful marshalling of all the needed facts or information, and concrete crystallization of the desired end-result. The very word "specification" starts with "specific."

* * *

This brings us to a second important point, also reflected in Parry Brandon's specifications: as already indicated, an end-result specification must be broken down into assignments. The purpose of assignments is to *implement* and *activate* a specification.

A single specification may be broken down into many assignments. Each assignment is, in effect, a specification in its own right, sharply specific as to what is needed or desired.

We will do well to think of all assignments, whether of broad character concerned with an over-all end-result, or with segments of a project to be farmed out to various people or groups in the organization, or to outside agencies, as *assignment-specifications.* It is desirable to put them in writing if at all practicable. This for two reasons: because we do not really come to grips with specification-writing until we try to put on paper what we are trying to accomplish; and because a written assignment is efficient for the specification-fillers to work to. If the end-result has been clearly stated there can be no alibi for failure. In addition, a written assignment

specification can much more easily be "tickled" for follow-up.

The reason so many excellent plans and projects are never brought to completion is that they are permitted to drift. TIME is a vital part of every specification. The time-factor may be three hours for a minor assignment-specification, or it may be three years for a major research project.

There are four chief aspects of "timing" a specification, or the assignments which compose it:

1. A specified over-all time when the assignment is to be completed.
2. Time-steps for the completion of partial assignments.
3. A definite time for progress reports, either on partial assignments or on the general status of the project or program.
4. On major specifications (such as for ambitious programs involving large capital investment, important research or development projects, or major organization undertakings) a definite review date should be set when a decision is to be made as to (a) the next step, (b) a temporary halt, or (c) the abandonment of the project, either because it is too costly, or another avenue or solution has opened up, or the need no longer exists, or the specification really *is* impossible to fulfill in the present state of knowledge or experience, or with the facilities or talents available.

Whatever the time schedule decided upon, it should be "tickled" and followed up persistently.

* * *

Sometimes the specification-writer can — and should — arbitrarily prescribe a time schedule or set a time limit. More often, the time-factor should be a matter of agreement.

It often happens that an upper echelon executive will call

for the completion of an assignment in so short a time that i needlessly disrupts the work of his associates, and perhaps o whole departments. In his enthusiasm for action, he has no taken into account that the people who must carry out the plan or project may have other important responsibilities. For thi reason, whenever feasible it is best to ask those responsibl for the assignment to set a time, or suggest a schedule whic can be carried out without too great disruption.

If the suggested time or schedule is not satisfactory, the the importance of the project can be reappraised and a sensibl timetable agreed upon. Often subordinates will submit a tighte time-schedule than we would ask. In any event, except in a emergency, it is usually good leadership to arrive at the tim schedule by mutual agreement rather than by executive decree

Once a time has been set, no one concerned should be per mitted to change it without the setting of an acceptable ne time. A report should be called for, automatically, on th appointed day or at the agreed-upon hour if it is a "quickie assignment. The art of effective follow-through is to keep gentle and steady — but firm — pressure on the time facto of all assignments, based on the expectation of steady progress This avoids the high-pressure periods of emergency or crisis — the "running to fires" — which keep many organizations upse It is a technique of *sustained momentum,* which can be one o the most valuable habits any organization can develop. An with the right kind of leadership a whole organization *ca* develop this habit.

The great weakness of nearly all managements is lack o persistency in follow-through. Plans and projects are attacke with vigor and enthusiasm. Then obstacles are encountered, o the responsible executive becomes involved in other matters and the project languishes. It takes drive and determinatio to keep an assignment moving, for as soon as the going grow a little rough the tendency is to put the plan or project asid "temporarily."

This is the hour of testing for the specification technique. Once momentum is lost, it takes double or triple the energy to get a specification rolling again.

The desk drawers of thousands of otherwise able business executives are full of well-started-but-never-fulfilled plans and projects which would have resulted in profits and progress for the business, and personal growth for the individual concerned, if only they had been completed.

One day at the weekly top-management conference of a large industrial corporation a major project was being reported on by one of the vice-presidents. This project was of such importance to the business that its progress had been discussed and further steps planned at every weekly meeting of the group over a period of three months.

"Well, let's think it over a little longer," said the President, vaguely, and turned to the next item on the agenda without setting a new date for further discussion. From that minute momentum was lost.

It was many months before the project was revived, and when it was everybody in the group groaned inwardly at the thought of having to get into "that problem" again. Yet it had been so nearly resolved months before that if a definite date for further discussion and decision had been set on the day the President allowed it to become side-tracked, and the specification had been sharpened a bit in the light of what the discussions up to then had developed, it could have been brought to completion (as it ultimately was), and the business would not have lost its momentum.

It frequently happens that, as progress reports are made, a specification must be revised. Sometimes the revision is in timing, sometimes in direction, sometimes in the end-result.

Frequently a specification can be made much more concrete, an sometimes even more demanding as the assignment progresses

There will, of course, always be a tendency for an organ zation to try to "relax" a difficult specification. At such time Parry Brandon's effective slogan — "Smile — but insist!" is i order.

Often we must apply this smile-but-insist discipline to ou selves, when we are tempted to weaken on some self-impose specification, or lower our own sights with respect to the enc result. It is natural for all of us to try to escape our problem The temptation is to "sweep them under the rug." Every tim we do this we weaken ourselves. Conversely, every time we mak ourselves "come through," we are stronger for the discipline w have brought to bear.

* * *

A very bad habit that should be nipped in the bud is th of automatically postponing a project time after time as i scheduled date comes around. The time-factor of a specific tion is a "demand note" to be *paid off,* not *put off* just becau we are very busy, or because a later date would be more co venient. So often a definite decision can be made quickly, action can be taken easily, if we make up our minds we a going to *settle* the matter.

If, for good and sufficient reasons, it is definitely ar officially decided to abandon a specification, that is one thin But it should not be permitted simply to wither on the vi through procrastination or lack of pressure for completion. T price of progress is a dogged and determined perseveran which maintains momentum.

* * *

When a specification has been fulfilled, credit and appre ation are in order, to provide a sense of achievement a progress, and to build confidence in the ability of those w participated to master all manner of specifications.

How To Write Specifications

The writing of specifications is really very simple. In a sense every executive does it every day when he gives assignments to his people, or to outside organizations or agencies.

But managing a business, or a department or section of a business, by the specification technique calls for sharper specifications than many of us customarily write.

Perhaps "write" is not quite the word to use. While it is wise to write out our specifications, for reasons already mentioned, specification-writing is a habit-of-mind rather than a method. It starts with *thinking* in specifications:

— In terms of the problem and the needed facts about it;
— In terms of end-results rather than methods;
— In terms of follow-through.

Too often we start a project with about half the facts, only a vague idea of the end-result, and no very definite time-target.

The specification technique calls for thinking *sharply* and thinking *through.* We may do this in the course of a few minutes, and give our instructions, either verbally or in writing. Or it may take hours or days to marshall the needed facts and factors, and formulate a clear-cut specification.

Once we have a crystal-clear idea of what we want to accomplish, we have our specification. It remains to ask for that end-result, either verbally or on paper, and add a time factor, either in the form of a target-date (or target-hour), or some kind of a time-schedule.

Most of us think we are pretty definite in the assignments we initiate, but a little practice at putting the desired end-results

in specification form and adding a time-factor is likely to show us that we have been pretty vague as to the former, and lax as to the latter.

Formulating and scheduling assignment-specifications can be as natural as breathing. It soon becomes second nature to think in terms of specifications.

* * *

To write out even the simplest assignment is usually worth the time it takes, for in the act our minds bring the project or plan into sharp focus. We see it clearly as a whole and are less likely to overlook any of its essentials. One executive who has used the specification technique for years tries to reduce all minor assignments to 3x5 slips which he has typed in duplicate, one copy to hand out and the other for his "tickler."

More important assignments can be in memorandum or letter form, with copies to all concerned.

However we handle actual assignments, whether verbal or written, the important point about managing with the specification technique is that all our thinking and planning start with the *end-result* and the *time-of-completion*, rather than with the *beginning* of the project or plan. We may start with only a tentative target-time, but as the assignment progresses the timetable should be firmed up as quickly as possible so that the project or plan will not drag on, needlessly consuming the time and energy of all concerned and holding back the progress of the business.

The reason so many assignments founder in the execution is because instructions are so vague that no meeting of minds occurs, either as to what is to be done or when completion is expected. "As soon as you can have it ready" is not specific. "By ten tomorrow morning" is.

When things go wrong and the subordinate pleads, "I didn't understand," usually it is not his or her fault. The trouble usually is lack of a clearly expressed assignment-specification.

Once we learn to think in specifications, it behooves us to teach those reporting to us to use the specification technique in their work, also. There is not a department or section head, a superintendent or foreman, a branch manager or store manager, who cannot increase his effectiveness by learning to formulate clear-cut specifications of his own, either mentally or on paper.

In time all the members of an organization — from top management executives down through middle management and supervisory people — will learn to formulate their own specifications and set their own time schedules. Furthermore, they will get great satisfaction out of doing so, and they and the business will make much faster progress.

The Specification Technique Offers a Stimulating Challenge

While the essence of successful use of the specification technique is the fulfillment of definite specifications, on a fairly firm time schedule, using the "tickler" method of keeping the project or program under continuous pressure, assignments should not be used as oppressive chores but as stimulating challenges. The manager's attitude should not be unreasonable and it need not be "hard-boiled"; but neither should it be soft or open to easy compromise.

The fulfillment of specifications should be approached as a game. The spirit should be: *It won't be easy — but it is possible — and well worth doing.*

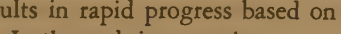
Management by the specification technique should always be good-natured, but firm, persistent and purposeful. When a specification seems at first glance to be really difficult, it is wise to explain it carefully and then give those who are to carry it out a little time to "digest" it before officially assigning it.*

Once a plan or project is launched, failures and excuses should be met with smiling insistence: "Let's keep on trying. It isn't easy, but let's see if it isn't possible."

At first it may seem a nuisance to formulate specifications and reduce them to written form. And, to start with, the "tickling" process may seem needless and the follow-up burden

* The importance of giving people time to "digest" a new idea or plan developed in detail in *TIME OUT FOR MENTAL DIGESTION*, by Robert Rawls. Executive Development Press, Inc.

some. But, those who have adopted the specification technique have found that, in a relatively short time, it becomes second nature — indeed, almost routine. They have discovered, too, that it greatly facilitates the whole process of administrating their jobs, and results in rapid progress based on easily maintained momentum. In the end, it saves time, energy, misunderstanding, mistakes, disappointments and failures.



"PLUS-ing" an assignment makes a project doubly interesting. A PLUS is a challenge added to the specification, as for example:

Specification: Find a man with the breadth of mind, experience, imagination, ability and personality to fill the position of Director of Marketing, as spelled out in our Job Description for that position, and capable of carrying its responsibilities as well as the previous incumbent, even though he may work very differently.

PLUS: A man with the potential of one day being worthy of consideration (among other candidates) for President of the company when that post becomes vacant.

Or, as another example, a specification involving an operating challenge:

Specification: Squeeze enough out of the cost of raw materials, processing, packaging, handling, shipping, selling or advertising Product X to permit a price reduction of ten cents a case — without impairing its appearance, taste, keeping qualities, utility or product appeal.

PLUS: Use this opportunity actually to *improve* something about the product, its packaging, or its convenience, so that it will have still greater consumer appeal.

A PLUS may or may not be realized, but it provides stimulating challenge to everyone involved in the assignmer It has the further virtue of making the basic specification see more easily attainable — which often helps to make it so!

✦ ✦ ✦

Today we have at our elbows a wide range of consultir firms, advertising agencies, research organizations, emplc ment agencies, law firms, engineering organizations, and infinite variety of service firms. Also, there are professior men with specialized experience who can be retained to car out researches or investigations, do special writing and editin provide creative talent, or furnish specialized counsel or a sistance in almost any field.

We have only to encounter a problem or sense an oppc tunity and there is "somebody, somewhere" who can help u

Here, again, the need is for a clear-cut specification. T often outside firms or individuals are called in and giv hours of conversational treatment but no sharply defined spe fication to work to. Frequently no time factor is agreed upo The result is that, after weeks or months of work, the en product delivered is unsatisfactory because the assignment w not clearly understood. Had there been a written specificatio a great deal of time, money and disappointment would ha been saved.

✦ ✦ ✦

All of us should form the habit of writing specificatio for *ourselves* to fulfill. We all have more experience, mo kinds of ability, and more capacity for accomplishment, tha we are presently using. And all of us are capable of makir things happen faster than we normally do. Working to sel imposed specifications — especially to really difficult ones - is exhilarating. We need the stimulation of tough specificatio that call for "everything we have," and a time schedule th calls for sharp concentration and sustained effort.

If this is true of us, it is equally true of those further down the organization line. One of the cardinal mistakes we make is the assumption that plans and projects must be made *easy* for everyone. The fact is, even though they may not realize it themselves, most people enjoy working to really difficult specifications. True, they may at first resist, or groan when they tackle a "toughie." But they usually end up by rising to its challenge.

A well-known author declares, "To me *writing* is hell, but *to have written* is soul-satisfying." In the same way, people undertaking to fulfill a difficult specification may fret and grumble, and perhaps try to slip out from under its demanding requirements while they are getting into it. But once the way starts to open up they begin to enjoy the challenge. And when they have fulfilled it they experience a deep sense of satisfaction. Furthermore, they have grown in stature and ability, and their confidence and self-respect have been fortified.

It is, therefore, no kindness to let people off with easy assignments. They are not stimulated. Nor do they respect their jobs or themselves if they are never asked to fulfill specifications which draw on their deeper resources of ability, skill, experience, imagination and stick-to-it-iveness.

In his book, *Tono-Bungay,* H. G. Wells has one of his characters say, "I did not want simply to live or simply to live happily or well; I wanted to serve and do and make — with some nobility."

In the same way, whether they ever stop to realize it or not, a considerable percentage of the people in any organization are not satisfied, deep-down in their spirits, merely to do their day's work. They want to serve or do or make with a sense of the *worthiness* of what they are doing. Or, if they do not actively *want* this, they are gratified when they experience it, and become much more interested in their work.

Thus it develops that the specification technique not only *gets things done;* it also *builds people.* And because so many

specifications must be worked on by groups of people, it a
develops *team effectiveness.*

In today's fiercely competitive struggle nearly all mana
ments are on trial. Organizations have to *prove* that they
capable of handling the problems and opportunities of
business effectively enough to make progress and maintain
rate of momentum that will keep it earning and growing.

While the specification technique of management will
by itself insure profits and progress, any organization wh
adopts its bold philosophy and masters its simple routine w
develop a strength, a team confidence, and a momentum wh
will give it a fighting advantage over its competition.

The individual executive who learns to use the specificat
technique in carrying out his responsibilities is likely to go
and fast. For he will develop a strength, a confidence, an
personal momentum which will make him a tremendou
effective individual.

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